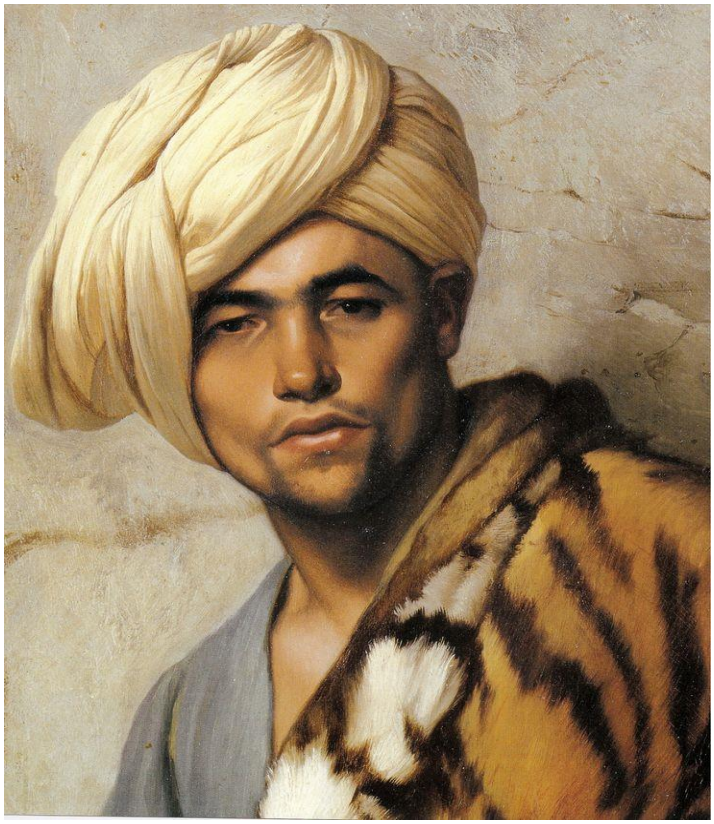
Mohamed EL Metmari, Department of English Language and Literature. UAE. Faculty of letters and Humanities, Martil.

Re-reading The Exotic Other in Western Paintings



Name: Mohamed El Metmari.
Supervised by:Dr. Jamal Eddine Benhayoun and Dr. Layachi El Habbouch.
A Bachelor in Art Research Paper- Three years.
Abdelmalek Essadi University. Faculty of Letters and Humanities.Department of English Studies.Martil,Morocco.
Email: Muhammadmetmari@outlook.com

Abdelmalek Essaadi University
Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Letters and Humanities.
Martil, Morocco.

Re-reading the Exotic Other in Western Paintings

CONDUCTED BY
Mohamed El METMARI

SUPERVISED BY
Dr. Jamal Eddine BENHAYOUN
Dr. Layachi El HABBOUCH

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Dedication

To my mother who is my main source of motivation and inspiration.
To my little sisters Fatima Zahrae and Nora who always inspire me for new beginnings.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exploring the hegemonic colonial discourse Orientalist paintings bestow. It provides a re-reading of these western paintings employing a post-colonial approach, mainly they theory of Orientalism in which the Palestinian-American literary critic Edward W. Said has established. The project puts these paintings under harsh criticisms; subverting the colonial agendas they manifest and challenging accepted norms and aesthetic values in which they carry. Thus, based on counter-narratives that debunk the authenticity of orientalist artistry, this research paper calls for a re-evaluation of the representation of the exotic other in western paintings.

KEY WORDS.

Orientalism, Postcolonial theory, Colonial Discourse, Hegemony, Art, Aesthetics.

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NTRODUCTION

> Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilizatrice*.
> ― **Edward W. Said, *Orientalism***.

We have all encountered, at least once in our lives, an Orientalist painting that displays an Oriental woman in nudity; have been pleased with the imagery it presents, the artist's craftsmanship it bestows, but we have never really questioned whether this depiction is in line with the reality it portrays. However, naively obsessed by the image, one tends to forget that it can never be of an Islamic sphere. Rather, it is a constructed image by artists who write Arabic from the opposite side, orientalists. In general, Orientalism remains an underestimated phenomenon, what has always been perceived as a linking bridge between two culturally, ethnically and historically different spheres is argued by many post-colonial theorists to be otherwise. Orientalism manifested in art is definitely not a new phenomenon. Its roots can be traced back to the sixteenth century with the rise of diplomatic and ambassadorial delegations between the East and West. Nevertheless, it was until the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth century that classical Orientalist artistry was at its peak, that is to say, during the Romantic era when the exoticism and eroticism of the Orient fed into the Romantic artist's ideals and imagination. Moreover, what has really paved ways to the Orientalists was Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in

Egypt and Syria (1798–1801).[1] This campaign, opened doors for many artists to visit the Orient and played a major role -in addition to tourism- in raising the interest on the Orient as an exotic other that needed to be studied in the late eighteenth-century. Those artists, devotedly, depicted the Orient in grandiose works of art that were aesthetically sublime, but they were fraught with their sexual fantasies by encapsulating the whole Orient in the sensual woman which asserts on the West's ceaseless desire to dominate the East in order to make its existence dominant and superior while the East remains vulnerable and inferior as Edward Said argues in his book *Orientalism* 1978. One of the major criticisms against Said is that he did not mention North Africa despite the region's experiences of colonial and imperial rule. In my paper, however, I have implemented North Africa, Morocco in specific, to fill this gap which Said's book fails in responding to.

I have divided my paper into three major chapters. First, I conducted a general introduction on the scope of Orientalism and the roots of Orientalist artistry which goes back to the Greeks through the middle ages and Romanticism to our modern age. In the second chapter, I presented these paintings with concrete follow-ups of the artists' style, art and personal lives. Finally, I have provided counter-narratives that debunk and reverse the meta-narrative these Orientalist paintings manifest. I concluded the paper with an urge to re-evaluate and re-reared these paintings and seek a new definition or image, so to speak, of the orient away from being independent on the one Orientalist artists constructed.

[1] In her 1998 book *Orientalism in Art*, The French contemporary art historian Christine Peltre states that the West manifested in nineteenth-century Europe has always been fascinated by the Orient. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has been initiated by Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian Campaign of 1979 which paved ways to a tradition that has continued modern eras.

Orientalism in art being, after all, just an Occidental fabrication, and merely just a Western sexual yearning, and not that exactitude of portrayal as we have all imagined, is a reason that is convincing enough to write my thesis about. The Orient's image was blatantly misrepresented and feminized. Furthermore, the choice of paintings and art is not a randomly picked approach to studying this issue, as images are the strongest forms of expression since they are psychologically appealing. Thus, they leave solid impressions that are fadeless unless with a conscious and objective examination. In addition to this, these paintings were considered as history paintings, therefore, perceived to bestow an authentic content. However, the discourse of Orientalism has evolved, these paintings are still admired nowadays by art galleries' owners, private collectors, and museums' curators. They are still construed to be the most sublime and picturesque works of art despite their lack of an authentic content and failure to define and objectively document the object they represent. Also, my artistic proclivity and interest contributed to pursue such endeavor. Personally, I have no opposition to the depiction of the nude in arts, but the idea of an Islamic nude is something that I simply cannot disregard. Orientalism being as such; it becomes imperative to carefully examine it since its nature is Occidental more than it is Oriental. Additionally, these Orientalist paintings responded more to the culture that produced them than their actual appearance. This explains why the Orient in those paintings appears to be backward and exotic. Significantly enough, as I am trying to contribute to refute these fabricated images of the Orient, there are several neglected artists who documented the Orient's otherness objectively. Therefore, their work provides counter-narratives to the typical meta-narratives that dominate Orientalism. Such was the case with female Orientalist artists who actually visited the East and were able to depict it objectively, and more importantly, as it was. Thus, their portrayal abolished all sorts of eroticism that was realized to

be just an Occidental sexual yearning that is not allowed in the west.[2] Nevertheless, albeit the truthfulness of their work, paintings by the male Orientalist are more precious and laudable in private collections and museums. This emphasizes that there is a whole part of history and art history that needs to be rewritten to rectify and draw a new image of the Orient away from perceiving it as a dependent entity on Orientalism.

Approaching Orientalism, there could not be a more suitable approach than post-colonial theories, as Orientalism manifests a colonial discourse that their criticism fell heavily on since the years of decolonization in the early 1960s. Among many scholars' contributions, Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* remains the standard work of criticizing Orientalism. It is true that Said did not comment on Orientalist art in his book, yet he confirmed in many of his interviews that works of art by well-established European artists such Ingres, Delacroix, and Gérôme were a major inspiration for him to write his book.[3] Edward Said definition of an orientalist goes as "Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient-and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist-either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism."[4] Additionally, Said analyzes Orientalism as a discourse using Michel Foucault's famous notion of a discourse, as Foucault described in his *The Archeology of Knowledge* 1969 and *Discipline and Punish* 1975. Said asserts that " without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage-

[2] İrvın Cemıl Schick. *Representing Middle Eastern Women: Feminism and Colonial Discourse*. Rev. of *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East*, By Sarah Graham-Brown; *the Colonial Harem*, by Malek Allola*; Europe's Myths of Orient*, by Rana Kabbani. Feminist Studies 16.2 (1990): 345-380.

[3] Media Education Foundation; executive producer & director, Sut Jhally ; producer & editor, Sanjay Talreja. *Edward Said On Orientalism*. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1998. Print, p. 3. This interview remains one of the best interviews in which Said succinctly summarizes and defends the argument he raised in his book.

[4] Edward W Said. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979, p. 2.

and even produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."[5] Another important notion Said uses is Cultural Hegemony which was coined by the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci developed his notion when he was imprisoned by the Italian Fascist regime in 1926. He produced what is known as *Quaderni del carcere or The Prison Notebooks*. The word's origin is imbedded in the Greek term *hēgemonía*, meaning domination, authority, rule or political supremacy. In its modern use, it signifies the domination and influence of one group, entity or a set of ides over others; individuals in power and influence use hegemonic ideas to gain domination over the subjugated classes. They do so by manipulating language, morality, common sense. It is for certain that the discourse of orientalism is hegemonic in its essence as said emphasizes "in a society not totalitarian, certain cultural forms predominate over others, the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*. It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength I have been speaking about so far."[6] Moreover, this paper provides a dialectical clash of arguments between modern Post-colonial theory and the Romanticist aesthetic ideals of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Here I simply refer to Romanticist notion such as the Sublime and the Picturesque. Orientalist paintings were valued for acquiring these aesthetic values despite the fact they were produced in a colonial context. One of the greatest books of the era that vindicates the spirit of the sublime is Edmund Burk's 1909 book *On Taste: On the Sublime and Beautiful; Reflections on the French Revolution; A Letter to a Noble Lord*. Furthermore, as I am dealing with the representation of females in western paintings there is a great deal of feminist, meaning the field, terminology in my paper. Many of whom are inspired by the Moroccan

[5] Ibid., 3.
[6] Ibid., 7.

sociologist Fatema Mernissi. Merniss's books such as *Beyond the Viel* 1975 and *Shahrazad Goes West* 2000 as well as other feminist post-colonial critics such the Syrian historian Rana Kabbani were of great use for my research. Yet, this paper is not a vindication for the feminist cause as it is a search of authenticity in the paintings under study.

Supporting her arguments with Said's theory, the art historian Linda Nochlin implemented the critique on Orientalism in art history with her 1983 essay The *Imaginary Orient*. Thus, Said's extensive criticism and many other scholars' proved that Orientalist paintings are not to be taken as defining images of the Orient. Therefore, they must be reconsidered nowadays and put under a serious examination as the stereotype they propagated about the Orient managed to survive in the west as a Romantic and colonial nostalgia reproduced in arts, movies, and literature. A situation that continues to reproduce itself as far as the West, manifested now alongside with Europe in the United States, perceives itself as the hegemonic power and the origin whereas anything that is not part of their territory is just a periphery.

THE EXOTIC OTHER IN 19th-CENTURY ART.

I.1. PRE-NINETEENTH CENTURY ENCOUNTERS WITH THE EXOTIC OTHER.

Orientalism, as it is known nowadays, is by no means a new phenomenon. The Orient, or the current Middle East, has always been a subject of curiosity to western artists. They were lured by the opulence and exoticness of its landscape and inhabitants. For them, it was an obsession full of desires and fantasies. Obviously, Orientalism manifested in arts existed before the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth century, the epoch of Romanticism.[7] This fascination with the exotic other, however, was actually commenced by early encounters that can be traced back to the Sixteenth century. Highlighting of course, even earlier encounters between the Islamic world and Christian Europe such as the case with the civilized Andalucía and the Crusades which lasted from the Tenth to the late Thirteenth-century. Yet, it was until the Sixteenth century that the exotic other started to manifest itself as a Romantic destination for Occidental artists; a destination that was encapsulated in exotic beings, extravagant landscapes, and unusual habits. It was very apparent in some of the works of art by artists such as Bellini, Veronese, and Rubens.[8] The early encounters with this Other during those periods were not constrained in depicting it for cases of study as it was the case with the Napoleonic Campaign in Egypt and Syria (1779-1801). Rather, they were associated with commerce and diplomacy –especially with the rise of diplomatic

[7] Jennifer Meagher. *Orientalism in Nineteenth-Century Art.* In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/euor/hd_euor.htm (October 2004)

[8] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*. the University of Rochester, 1982.pp.13-18.

correspondences with the major powers that sought alliances with each other.[9] The tradition of Orientalist portraiture was basically initiated by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (Fig.1), known to the West as Muhammad al-Fatih the Conqueror, when he invited Gentile Bellini to paint his portrait while the Italian Bellini was resident in Constantinople between 1479 and 1481. The practice was to become increasingly popular from the eighteenth century onward among wealthy Ottomans.[10] As far as factors that are associated with trade, the Levant Company that was founded with Elizabeth I's encouragement on 1581 established the first basis of contact between Turkey and the West. Additionally, the East India Company, which was created in the sixteenth century, stands as a perfect example of these prominent encounters related to commerce and trade. The agents of this colossal company, simultaneously, combined between the roles of company agents and ambassadors until the eighteenth century- which was known for its independence of travel and tourism towards exotic destinations. Such rare journeys were usually commemorated by portraits.[11]

Additionally, for both Western powers and Oriental empires were as equally powerful with no chances for one to patronize the other, trade and diplomacy also resulted in Eastern travelers to the West. Such was the case of delegations sent to Europe by both the independent kingdom of Morocco and Persia.[12] In the case of Morocco, which was a dominion that western powers sought alliances with back then, started negotiation at the end of the sixteenth century with European powers against Spain; as occurred between Elizabeth I of England and Ahmad

[9] Tromans, Kabbani, Mernissi, Riding , Weeks. *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*. Yale University Press, 2008. 48.
[10] Mary Roberts. *Contested Terrains: Women Orientalists and the Colonial Harem*. Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography. Ed. Beaulieu Jill and Roberts Mary. Duke University Press, 2002.179- 203: p. 192.
[11] Tromans, Kabbani, Mernissi, Riding, Weeks. *The Lure of the East : British Orientalist Painting*. Yale University Press, 2008: 48.
[12] Ibid., 49.

Al Mansur of Morocco. These correspondences, allegedly, lit the first sparks of the obsession with the Orient as the "Moorish other" in Literature and arts. Consequently, such influence was indubitable in works of English dramatists. A case in point, Shakespeare in his well-acclaimed tragedy of *Othello 17th century*. In his play, Shakespeare depicts the character of Othello as a jealous Moorish lover and a husband of a white Venetian girl, Desdemona. In the same context, the presence of the Moroccan delegate Abd Al-Wahid ben Massoud ben Muhammad Anoun in London in 1600 (Fig.2), who is said to be the inspiration for Shakespeare's *Othello*, inspired an early example in British portraiture of an Oriental sitter. His portrait, with his traditional Islamic and exotic garments, was one of the first in a line of portraits of visiting ambassadors to Europe in general and Britain specifically.[13] However, North Africa including Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia became purely French artistic territory as France started its imperial enterprise in the region in the nineteenth century. The enterprise was initiated with the occupation of Algeria in 1830, an event that made ways for many French Orientalist painters to the Orient, artists who were lured by the area; including the well-known French Romantic artist Eugène Delacroix.

In the eighteenth century, Orientalists such as John Frederick Lewis and David Wilkie painted portraits of the Ottoman leaders Mehemet Ali Pasha in 1841 and Sultan Abdul- Majid in 1840. These portraits had both honorific and diplomatic functions. Honorific by connoting the authority and dynastic legitimacy of these leaders, and a diplomatic function as they were often presented to foreign courts as a gesture of goodwill between nations.[14]Yet, the depiction of the harem women was another matter; they were very often for personal consumption. As far as the harem women portraiture, respectable Muslim women would not pose for European male

[13] Ibid, 49.
[14] Mary Roberts. *Contested Terrains: Women Orientalists and the Colonial Harem*. Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography. Ed. Beaulieu Jill and Roberts Mary. Duke University Press, 2002. 179- 203.pp. 192-193.

painters. Therefore, European women were commissioned to execute their portraits.[15] Among these female artists we have: Mary Walker, Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann, and Henriette Browne. The depiction of the harem by female Orientalists will be a piece of evidence to refute the erotic nature of the harem women that was promoted by male artists who dominated nineteenth century's artistry.

Apparently, the arrival of strangers to the west will not make such a fuss merely to make an artistic influence, positive or negative, but it was the visual and sartorial contrast that they presented.[16] The dress had a great social, cultural, and religious significance in the Muslim territories throughout history. Furthermore, there is evidence that the Western dress was very often considered as inappropriate for the public sphere. In 1810, Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan, the Persian ambassador to London, noted in his journal that the English clothes were immodest and unflattering to the figure- especially trousers.[17] This view shows that Orientalist artists, to mingle with Orientals easily and depict them as well, they were obliged to dress exactly like them, as a European hat in an Eastern context was a clear sign of an intruder. Moreover, most artists who went East afterward either by their own, or part of diplomatic expeditions, dressed exactly like natives and adopted an Oriental dress and lifestyle to blend in and get information for their narratives and sketches.[18] With all this being said, the sphere the Orient presented hypnotized Orientalist artists since the sixteenth-century with its exotic beauty and strangeness of architecture and garments. This contrasting image the East presented for westerners inspired

[15] Ibid, 193.
[16] Tromans, Kabbani, Mernissi, Riding, Weeks. *The lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*. Yale University Press, 2008: 49.
[17] Ibid., 49.
[18] Ibid., 49.

picturesque and sublime paintings that their authenticity of depiction is not yet put under a serious evaluation.

I.2. THE COLONIALIST NATURE OF ORIENTALISM.

One of the most defining and aggressive encounters between East and West, which is looked at as an extension of the Crusades, is Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798. This invasion and the subsequent colonization of the Near East is perhaps the most crucial moment in the western perception of the Orient. This encounter is entirely different from the others that occurred before. Napoleon did not go with the intention to trade with the Egyptians. Contrarily, above all its colonial agendas, this conquest tended to study the Orient. [19] Napoleon Bonaparte (1769- 1821), the megalomaniac general, intended to conquer Egypt not on political levels only but on cultural ones as well. Therefore, he brought with him the most proficient scholars and painters in this campaign in order to document his momentous experience. Regarding artists, Napoleon originally asked Jacques-Lewis David (1748-1825) to accompany him. Although David had actually considered Napoleon as his inspiring figure, he refused to escort him in his campaign.[20] Instead of him, Vivant Denon (1747 1825) traveled to Egypt. Moreover, taking the place of his mentor, Antoine Jean Gros (1771-1835), the pupil of David also joined Napoleon's campaign. Gros, unlike Denon who saw the East through unbiased eyes, depicted Napoleon regularly serving the job of a propagandist, if that is to say, of the ideologies behind the invader's ultimately-doomed campaign.[21] The French army landed in Alexandria on July 1st, 1797 where they actually faced little resistance from the natives mainly because of military reasons. Three weeks later, the army marched to Cairo, the beating heart of Egypt,

[19] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*. Boston College University Libraries. (2004):8
[20] Ibid.,8.
[21] Jennifer Meagher. *Orientalism in Nineteenth-Century Art.* In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000 – http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/euor/hd_euor.htm (October 2004)

where they confronted the Mamluks army and went victorious in the Battle of the Pyramids.[22] Gros documented this battle by a huge propagandistic painting (Fig.3).

What makes the figure of Vivant Denon interesting is that he was one of the prominent artists in the expedition called by Napoleon. After he went to Egypt, he spent months sketching and writing. He produced what is known today as *Travelers in Upper and Lower Egypt* 1803, this travelogue account is among the earliest travel publications produced by visitors to Egypt –It was, as it was meant to be, an extensively detailed scientific study more than it was a journal travelogue. Denon's elaborate descriptions of the land and the whole sphere of the cultural other helped to increase the Occidental's interest in this cultural otherness. However, the Napoleonic expedition served to cut off British trade routes to India in specific, on the Mediterranean in a large scope, and it served as a colonial enterprise in brief.[23] The artists who escorted Napoleon, who are the main focus of this part of the paper, shared the same ideas as Napoleon. A case in point, the artist Antoine-Jean Gros, whose works were clearly propagandistic such as his painting *Bonaparte Visiting the Victims of the Plague at Jaffa* 1804 (Fig.4). In this artwork, he portrayed the hundreds of French and Arab soldiers who had been infected by the plague while fighting in Tel Aviv in 1799. The reason why Napoleon commissioned such a painting was that he wanted to confront accusations that had been made of him poisoning his own troops. The painting, against the accusations, shows Napoleon as a responsible Leader, even touching the body of one of the plagued soldiers while, in contrast, his assistant stayed away and covered his mouth. This painting presented Napoleon as a Christ-like figure, healing the ill, and is therefore quintessentially propagandistic. It shows how Gros was selling Napoleon to the public as a hero

[22]Erin A. Peters. *The Napoleonic Egyptian Scientific Expedition and the Nineteenth-Century Survey Museum.* Seton Hall University (2009): 12.
[23]Ibid.,13

instead of a tyrant conqueror.[24] Noting that Gros did not visit the place of the incident, nor was he in the East in the first place- he was prevented from traveling by the British navy. Instead, he relied on eyewitness accounts for details of battles, local color, and setting as he sat and painted in his Parisian studio.[25]

Even though France's control over Egypt was actually short for Napoleon's army was eventually defeated by the British navy. Napoleon was one of the first Westerners to draw massive studies on the East. And the fact that the expedition did not mean much to France- at least at that time, the work of the savants was an unprecedented scholarly achievement.[26] During the Egyptian scientific expedition, a French soldier discovered the Rosetta Stone, one of the most precious and important artifacts ever discovered, its value was instantly realized by the imperial powers as it was the key to decoding ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Afterward it would lay the foundation for Egyptology. The expedition, which was seen earlier as a military disaster, became one of the main factors that paved ways to Orientalism.[27] Although Napoleon's invasion of Egypt was tackled by many confrontations with the British and the Natives as well, it had not only launched European colonization of the Middle East and its consequences, but it had also lured a bunch of scientists, scholars, academics, and travellers who were eager to see for themselves what had previously been a subject of speculation. The Orient, therefore, did not forge its way in painting powerfully until the final years of the eighteenth century.[28]

[24] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*. (2004).pp. 11-12.
[25] June Taboroff. *The Orientalists*. Saudi Aramco World Magazine. November/December 1984: 18-27.
[26] Erin A. Peters. *The Napoleonic Egyptian Scientific Expedition and the Nineteenth-Century Survey Museum*. Seton Hall University (2009): 22.
[27] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*. (2004): 10.
[28] June Taboroff. *The Orientalists*. Saudi Aramco World Magazine. November/December 1984: 18-27.

I.3. ROMANTICIST ORIENTALISM.

The Orient was a perfect destination for the Romanticists who were obsessed with traveling to remote and exotic places. Thus the explosion of the Orient with the Napoleonic campaign was, in fact, a perfect fit for the Romanticists. Consequently, the promoted exoticism and eroticism of the exotic other fed into Romanticist ideals and imaginations.[29] Because of the turmoil brought by the ideas that Enlightenment defended for so long, the followers of the Romanticist movement realized that the physical reality of their time could never satisfy the demands of their mind, thus they started looking for a new world for inspiration.[30] To escape his alienation with nature, the Orient represented that natural harmony for the Romanticist artist since the inhabitant of the Orient was not yet alienated from himself by civilization. Therefore, the Romanticists felt that by belonging to this other it would bring about a spiritual transformation3, hence, their escapism was via either Orientalism or mythology.[31]

Generally speaking, the 1830s and early 1840s were the golden age of French Orientalism. Artists, for the first time, traveled to the East in increasing numbers and returned with bulky sketchbooks that they used for the rest of their careers.[32] It is also worth mentioning that the Oriental landscape captured and seduced the British Romanticist painters as well. People in early nineteenth century Britain spent time searching for images of distant lands and illustrated travel literature. Moreover, landscape painting was traditionally a highly refined art among the British artists and collectors, for this reason, the Oriental landscape was the best inspiring destination to

[29] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*." (2004) : 15.
[30] Claudia Mareike Katrin Schwabe. *Romanticism, Orientalism, And National Identity: German Literary Fairy tales, 1795-1848*. University of Florida.2012: 40.
[31] Ibid.,41.
[32]Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*. The University of Rochester, 1982: 43.

head to since its exoticness is irresistible for British artists.[33] Eroticism, on the other hand, became more explicit in painting. The idyllic trysts, inspired by Byronic sources, during the Romanticist era, were gradually overshadowed by mere erotic wish fulfillment. A hapless nude ill-fated slave girl being examined by dressed Oriental buyers, voluptuous odalisques; such blatant fantasies of male dominance and female submission were among the favorite subjects of the orientalists of that period.

Romanticism, in specific, is marked by its revolutionary aesthetic views. Therefore, the popularity of disasters and death scenes such as Delacroix's *the Massacre at Chios* 1824, or *The Death of Sardanapalus 1827*(Fig.8) inspired by Lord Byron's play about the last king of Assyria, is rooted in the concept of the sublime. The sublime as explained by Edmund Burk in his *1756* book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* is a delight that arises from the contemplation of a dreadful scene – that could not harm the spectator, except in imagination. The resulting imagery produces an emotion that is much terrifying than that presented by beauty.[34] Furthermore, the notion of the picturesque is an essential concept for romanticism. It is based on the idea that wandering stimulates an interest in the quaint; this explains why so many artists would travel to the Near East.

Despite the fact that many artists traveled to the Near East, the Middle East currently, it does not mean that they necessarily painted the Oriental landscape exactly as they saw it. They certainly went to the Orient-some of them did not- but with preconceived notions of it.[35] Artists, such as Delacroix, Ingres, and Gérôme, who are the most famous Orientalists, they feminized the

[33] Tromans, Kabbani, Mernissi, Riding, Weeks. *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*. Yale University) Press, 2008: 102.
[34] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*. (2004): 15.
[35] Ibid.,16.

Orient and penetrated its veil through paintings that are not yet put under serious examination while they played a major role in establishing their career and fame, and constructing the typical stereotype of the Orient. Paintings that are defended by well-established art historians and art critics to be the most sublime and picturesque work of art.[36]

[36] Here I simply refer to Donald A. Rosenthal's book *Orientalism, the Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*. Rosenthal defends the aesthetic value of the paintings disregarding their colonial and Orientalist agendas. Nevertheless, the book is a great source for tracking the lives of the Orientalist artists whom I have eventually implemented in the thesis such as Ingres, Delacroix, and Gérôme, J.F. Lewis, Ludwig Deutsch, Cabanel and many others.

THE BLATANT MISREPRESENTATION OF THE EXOTIC OTHER IN PAINTINGS.

II.1. ORIENTALIST PAINTINGS BETWEEN CRITICISM AND LAUDATION.

It is for certain that the Palestinian-American literary theorist Edward Said did not discuss Orientalist art in his laudable book *Orientalism* 1978. Yet, since the publishing of his book, Said launched a new phase of conceiving the Orient apart from the one Orientalism encourages. The one that is fraught with stereotypes where the Orient is misconstrued for a mere exotic destination that is encompassed in erotic scenery, sartorial and habitual contrast, and backwardness.[37] Therefore, Orientalism with its scholarly and artistic manifestations has been the subject of reassessment by many scholars and art historians. The recently deceased art historian Linda Nochlin was the first to implement Said's notions to criticize Orientalist paintings in her 1983 article *The Imaginary Orient*.[38] Linda rejected an approach that secured aesthetics as a domain that is autonomous from colonial politics. In doing so, she contributed in a re-assessment of key terms by which Orientalist art continues to be analyzed.[39] Also, Orientalist paintings are, undeniably, an undivided part of the whole discourse of Orientalism which Said described as a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and most of the time the Occident."[40] Meaning, since this distinction is built on hegemonic basis, the Orient, whether in paintings or narratives, has always been depicted as inferior and exotic.[41]

[37] Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
[38] Julia Kuehn. *Exotic Harem Paintings: Gender, Documentation, and Imagination*. Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies 32.2 (2011). 31-63.pp. 31-32.
[39]Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts. *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography*. London: Duke University Press, 2002.): 3.

[40]Edward W.Said. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979: 2.
[41] Ibid.,pp.1-2.

Hence**,** being labeled this way, the East's idleness, laziness, cruelty, technical and scientific backwardness are constantly marked in order to justify the occidental other's superiority which is exactly what the Orientalist paintings manifest. Moreover, the Orient was illustrated as a place of delectation and extravagant sexuality which what seduced most of the Orientalists. Especially that harem was the defining symbol of the Orient for Europeans. As a result, quarters of Eastern women were illustrated in numerous times, including harem and bath scenes. Such depiction, apparently, established the visual agenda of Orientalist discourse where the nude or half nude was spotted out in the painting and enriched with shiny jewels, coverlets that invite the spectator's gaze.[42]

As it was mentioned, Harem or the Oriental woman precisely gained a precious seat in nineteenth-century art. Orientalist painters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, John Frederick Lewis, Théodore Chasseriau, Eugène Delacroix, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, as many others, depicted countless scenes in which half-naked Oriental women- or more specifically- Muslim women, in harem quarters reclined in seductive positions on cushions, or dancing voluptuously in royal courts; exhibited erotically in slave markets, or even gathered with other Oriental women in Turkish baths and harems. The harems were portrayed as concealed resorts that only one male had access to, the Sultan. Yet, strangely enough, the women in those paintings hardly ever looked Middle Eastern in most cases, and closely conformed to European standards of beauty with their light complexion, colored eyes, and blonde or brown hair.[43] Also, there was a tiny detail that the occidental public seemed to disregard, the fact that European artists who visited Muslim countries had absolutely no access to either those heaven -like baths or harems of

[42] Nimet Elif Vargı. *The Imagery of Woman in Nineteenth Century Orientalist Photography*. Bđlkent University (2010):pp. 36-37.
[43] Wijdan Ali. *Muslim Women: Between Cliché and Reality*. Diogenes (2003): 78.

the Orient. Thus they may have never encountered unveiled Muslim women, let alone naked ones.[44] Many of the orientalists had not even been to Eastern countries; they were armchair painters working in their studious in Paris and London. However, it seems that they succeeded in propagating the most widely spread clichés about the Orient; portraying Oriental women as evil, profligate sex objects, whose sole aim in life was to seduce and satisfy illicit desires of the Oriental male, or more specifically the sexual desires of the Orientalist artists and the voyeuristic instincts of the Western spectator.[45] The Orient being Orientalized and eroticized as Said had put it. More significantly, artists such as Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Eugène Delacroix, and Jean-Léon Gérôme embody Said's Ideas of representing the Islamic "other" as culturally inferior and backward people, especially in their portrayal of women.[46] Rana Kabbani explores this theme in her analysis on the issue of sex and gender in the discourse of Orientalism in her 1986 book *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of the Orient* on which she elaborates how the male dominance and the imagery of seduction were serving Orientalism.[47]As outsiders, painters quickly learned the limitations of their visits. The private sphere of Muslim society and Muslim women were frustratingly unattainable to them, so to compensate for this inaccessibility, male artists had to hire prostitutes or to simply use their imagination depending on traveling accounts. This, obviously, will lead to a distorted view of Oriental women as far as they were faced with the Orientalists' ultimate desire to penetrate their veils and paint them in positions they desired the most. This desire to penetrate the mysteries of the Orient, most notably the urge to enter into the forbidden space of the harem is indeed the climax of Orientalist predisposition. This will be

[44] Ibid., pp.77-78.
[45] Ibid., 78.
[46] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*. (2004):3.
[47] İrvın Cemıl Schick. *Representing Middle Eastern Women: Feminism and Colonial Discourse*. Feminist Studies 16.2 (1990): 345-380.p.358.

discussed in detail with three major European Orientalist artists, that is to say: Jean-AugusteDominique Ingres, Eugène Delacroix, and Jean-Léon Gérôme.

II.2. THE ORIENTALIST WHO HAD NEVER BEEN TO THE ORIENT.

Unlike Delacroix (1798- 1863) and Gérôme (1824- 1904) who had experienced the Orient firsthand, the Neo- classist French painter Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780- 1867) had never visited the Orient. Nevertheless, Ingres was definitely the most distinguished of the Orientalists; he was Delacroix's arch-rival and most importantly the chief heir of the neoclassical school of David. He always considered himself as a history painter though, ironically, his historical works were not preferable to the contemporary taste. Ingres, in general, was known for his diverse production that actually included a great number of Orientalist paintings. These works, however, differed from their Romanticist counterparts in their technique but not in their sensual, escapist subject matter.[48] Moreover, the inaccessibility of the Orient and especially Oriental women caused many artists to rely on travel accounts and such sources. Ingres, on the other hand, compensated this inaccessibility by depending on Lady Montagu's published letters of her adventures in Turkey, making his imagination go beyond his interpretation of the letters.[49]

As early as 1814, Ingres was executing a commission for Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples, for a large picture of a harem girl. This harem girl will become later his *Grande Odalisque* 1814(Fig.5) after he had transformed it into an Orientalist subject with the addition of few accessories such as the multicolored headdress, a peacock feather fan, and a Turkish incense burner.[50] Moreover, the painting's power lies in the fluid linearity and elegance of the figure and pose, and above all her partial nakedness that makes the voyeuristic beholder wants to see more. Although the odalisque is very beautiful and idealized, she has received much criticism, not

[48] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French painting, 1800-1880.* New York: The University of Rochester, 1982.pp.50- 52.
[49] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art.* (204): 17
[50] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*. New York: The University of Rochester, 1982: 52.

concerning the subject matter, but about the odalisque's anatomical proportions. From an anatomical point of view, she appears to have an extra vertebra, and her left leg does not seem to be in a realistic position. Also, Ingres exaggerated the size of her hips and the twist of her neck. Yet, this does not mean that a well-established artist such as Ingres did not understand anatomy. On the contrary, these distortions were done deliberately. Thinking of it this way, there was no way that the painting would have received much attention if it was properly proportioned.[51] Ingres's portrayal of harem women transcended the typical manner of depiction completely. He admitted that he used a ten-year-old Roman girl as his model for that painting. He only added the turban, fabric and peacock feathered fan to distinguish her as an odalisque. Unlike Delacroix's odalisques, Ingres's showed that they were products of pure imagination.[52] Another remarkable aspect about the artwork which stigmatizes the woman in the painting is her gaze. Needless to mention that the face is infant, the gaze, however, is a reciprocal action. The observer gazes at the woman in the painting and the woman in the painting gazes back at the beholder.Thus, she lives for his pleasure.

It is worth mentioning that Ingres's most completely realized Orientalist genre painting is *The Odalisque and Slave* 1841 (Fig.6) which depicts a Greek-like female nude reclining with a musician. This painting differs from *The Grand Odalisque* as this odalisque offers direct eroticism with her pose as well as offering much architectural detail. The position of the woman in the painting shows extreme sexuality. Her reclining provocative position is actually acceptable because she is not a European woman, but an odalisque. This asserts the fact that the painting feeds into the discourse of Orientalism where the Orient manifests the sexual arena of European male sexual desires that cannot be tolerated with in Ingres's own environment. Also, it is notable

[51] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art.* (2004):19
[52] Ibid., 20

how Ingres paid special attention to the details of the "authentic" decor. Ingres's remarkable craftsmanship defuses the spectator's attention by delineating a lot of pieces of *Orientalia*.[53] The woman in the painting, however, is a famous Parisian model named Madame Felix. Felix's features, apparently, do not relate to Eastern ones in any sense. Additionally, Ingres once again uses the conception of the erotic in a proportion-lacking figure, but eventually, it remains his ideal creation and not necessarily the most realist one. Uniquely, the skin color of the odalisque is significant; it shows western views of race since harem pictures were evaluated based on the skin color.[54] The most praised odalisque will be the one with the lightest complexion. *Odalisque with a Slave* is a great example of this as well as all Gérôme's harem works. In this painting, we see how the dark-skinned male figure is painted in the background; the brown-skinned female is nearly fully-clothed except her left breast that is partially exposed while she entertains her seducing naked white lady.

Eventually, all of Ingres's sketches of bathers and odalisques were synthesized into one painting which is *The Turkish Bath* 1862 (Fig.7). The scenery of this painting is clearly derived from the folds of fantasy. The great decor of *Odalisque and Slave* was disregarded because Ingres focused more on the profusion of female nudes. To prepare this painting, he read and copied out translations of Lady Wortley Montagu, an eighteenth-century English traveler who described the baths of Turkey very appealingly. Clearly, Ingres took only what he wanted from these letters, as Linda Nochlin comments on this painting's nature as "an egregiously unrealistic

[53] Ibid., 52.
[54]Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*. (2004): 22.

erotopia."[55]Such was the case when Ingres had stuffed this work with sexual overtones such as lesbian amours of the harem which had been an alluring theme for him. A case in point, the lesbian couple in the left corner of the painting. Moreover, as can be seen, the whole work was constructed as a peephole into a space that was forbidden to male access.[56] Thus, the painting was considered to be extremely erotic since all of the male's fantasies are manifested in one single work of art. The women in the painting, alas, are depicted as still lives of flesh located in a bath; directed to pose adequately, with each woman enjoying her own unique movement and the laziness that inhabits their bodies which are no longer theirs after becoming objects of desire.[57]

Stating that Ingres inspired his work from travel letters may signify some authenticity of his portrayals of baths despite the fact that they are imaginative, especially that these letters belonged to a woman who claimed that she had been inside a Turkish bath. Yet, out of many fragments, this part of Lady Montagu's letters makes us doubt their truthfulness, she states:

> I perceived that the ladies with the finest skins and most delicate shapes had the greatest share of my admiration, though their faces were sometimes less beautiful than those of their companions. To tell you the truth, I had wickedness enough to wish secretly that Mr. Jervas could have been there invisible. I fancy it would have very much improved his art to see so many fine women naked in different postures, some in conversation, some working, others drinking coffee or sherbet,

[55] Linda Nochlin. *The Imaginary Orient. The politics of vision: essays on nineteenth-century art and society*.Thames and Hudson, 1989. 33-59.
[56] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art.* (2004): 18.
[57] Nimet Elif Vargı. *The Imagery of Woman in Nineteenth Century Orientalist Photography*. Bđlkent University.(2010): 37.

> and many negligently lying on their cushions while their slaves (generally pretty girls of seventeen or eighteen) were employed in braiding their hair in several pretty manners.[58]

As quoted from a piece from the letters, the masculinity of Lady Montagu emerges in the detailed description of the women in Turkish baths. She must have been aspiring to see them in Jervas paintings and she wished that he could have been invisible among them enjoying the bathing scene of plenty of women.[59] Eventually, Ingres's painting *The Turkish Bath* is the embodiment of Lady Montagu's letters. This work is of pure of imagination and there is much subjectivity in the artist's method of visualizing the interior of the bath. Therefore, there is no way that such works can be identified -after all- as objective and authentic especially that Ingres had never been to the Orient.

[58] Wharn cliffe, & W. Thomas. (1861). *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, retrieved January 17, 2009. From http://www.ic.arizona.edu/ic/mcbride/ws200/montltrs.htm

[59] Nimet Elif Vargı. *The Imagery of Woman in Nineteenth Century Orientalist Photography*. Bđlkent University (2010): 39

II. 3. THE ROMANTICIST ORIENTALIST.

The most famous of the Orientalists is the French Romanticist artist Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863). Delacroix is known for his Romanticist settings with passionate colors and emotionally-moving works. Unlike most of the Orientalists, Delacroix had actually traveled to the Near East. His visit to Morocco in 1833 allowed him to experience the exoticism and beauty of the Orient firsthand.[60] Of course, the nature Delacroix's Orientalism changed considerably over the course of his career, but his interest in the Near East remained consistent throughout his life. Since he painted two of his most notable Oriental-themed paintings before his journey to Morocco, it is fair if they are carefully examined. First of all, Delacroix depicted many paintings in his adolescence depending on travel accounts, travel books, or imaginative literature. Concerning this latter, Delacroix painted several scenes depending on Lord Byron's poetry. The most Byronic painting is certainly Delacroix's masterpiece *The Death of Sardanapalus* 1827(Fig.8). From a stylistic point of view, it is the most daring work in his career as Donald A. Rosenthal argues in his book. Inspired by Byronic dramatic poem *Sardanapalus* (1821), it portrays the ancient Assyrian king Sardanapalus in his palace at Nineveh. He has been besieged by rebels, and rather let the rebels control his possessions, he orders the destruction of everything including the death of his concubines. Besides being inspired by Byron, Delacroix consulted a variety of sources to create an authentic image. Yet, despite the painting's sublimity and its brilliance of colors, the work was not well received in the Salon. The American art historian Linda Nochlin comments on the painting to be entirely representing of Eastern male domination, she also believes that it is not Western man's power over the Near East is the issue here, but rather

[60] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*. New York: The University of Rochester, 1982: 31.

contemporary French men's power over women. Therefore, the colonization of the Near East was justified by the fact that Western men perceived the East As a female.[61] The work was absolutely created for male reception, having the de-centered position of the king with sadist stares at his mistresses, gives way to the even more privileged view of the women's bodies. Furthermore, Delacroix's other masterpiece with an Oriental theme -before his ambassadorial visit to Morocco- is *The Massacre at Chios* 1822. The painting depicts the "brutality" and "hard-heartedness" of the Ottoman man; it illustrates an event from a (then) contemporary life event. The Greek wars of independence from the Ottoman Turks, the scene is the horrible episode of the Turkish massacre of the male inhabitants of the island of Chios and the enslaving of their women and children. Looking to the painting, the spectator will notice how the figures are arranged in Pyramidal composition of the figures to reflect their ultimate suffering. Realizing his maximized sympathy for the Greek victims, not to mention Delacroix's high concern to document this moment.[62] The painting reflects what Said calls "Eurocentric and Christian prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples and their culture."[63] The cruel Ottoman, riding his horse, grabs the naked women while slaying a man, but the most tragic figure remains of the child attempting to feed from his heinously murdered mother. However, when criticism of his work emerged, having merely re-used conventions derived from pictures of the plagues by other artists, such as Gross's painting *Napoleon at the Pothouse of Jaffa 1804,* Delacroix took a stand by asserting on the cruelty of the Ottomans while restating the innocence of the Greeks.[64] Furthermore, the two paintings were painted before Delacroix's career-changing journey to

[61] Linda Nochlin. *The Imaginary Orient. The politics of vision: essays on nineteenth-century art and society*. Thames and Hudson, 1989. 33-59.pp. 42-43.
[62] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art.*" Boston College University Libraries (2004):23.
[63]Ibid, 23.
[64] Ibid., 24.

Morocco where he would experience the Orient firsthand. Being faced with the falsity of stereotypes in one hand, and enjoying the ecstasy of his new discoveries on the other.

Delacroix's visit to Morocco came to happen as part of an ambassadorial mission to the country. For he had excellent official connections, he was attached to this diplomatic mission. He was sent by the French government to the sultan of Morocco Moulay Abdurrahman, the ruler of the only country that defied the Ottoman domination, in order to negotiate with him asserting control over the Algerian territories. Once his feet landed on the Moroccan soil, Delacroix was struck by the discrepancy between the Orient he was discovering and the one that he had represented in his previous works.[65] Moreover, during his visit, he found it difficult to capture the scenery and the Oriental figures the way he would have liked because he was escorted by heavy guards. But the major difficulty was the lack of the willing models, thus his biggest frustration was their inaccessibility. Not only were their houses off limits, but even voyeuristic gazes were tremendously risky.[66]Basically, the world of Muslim women took place entirely in private quarters. Despite this fact, Delacroix was fascinated with everything he saw in Morocco and in particular the dignified dress and bearing of the Moroccan population, rulers and masses alike. Like many escapists of the period, he saw in the Muslim world the picturesque world he wished to see. As he wrote during his residency in Morocco "they are closer to nature in a thousand ways; their dress, the form of their shoes, and so beauty has a share in everything that they make. As for us, in our corsets, tight shoes, ridiculous pinching clothes we are pitiful."[67] In brief,

[65] Ibid., 26.
[66] Ibid., 2.
[67] This fragment is taken from Delacroix's journal when he was in Morocco. It is implemented in Donald A. Rosenthal's 1982 book *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting, 1800- 1880*. Original source: Delacroix, Journal, April 28, 1832, Transl. Pach, 1972, p. 122.

Delacroix found that sartorial and cultural contrast North Africa presented to be rather impressive and fascinating.

As soon as he returned to France, sketches of individuals in Moroccan custom were later grouped into compositions. Among these compositions his first painting after the journey *The Street of Meknes (*1831). It became clear how he compensated for the inaccessibility to women by painting Moroccan Muslim men and Moroccan Jewish women- since Jewish models were all the female models available to him. A more convincing example is his painting *The Jewish Wedding in Morocco* (1839). This is not to say that Jewish Moroccan women were available to the Orientalist's desire to paint them, but at least they did not mind Delacroix sketching them. However, his most mesmerizing work with Moroccan subject is undoubtedly *The Sultan of Morocco and His Court* (1845). Nevertheless, his Orientalist works are criticized for their orinetalization of the Orient as he also painted the Dionysian side of North African life which can be clearly seen in his painting *The Fanatics of Tangiers* (1838). Also, he depicted several scenes which are discussed for having portrayed this cultural other as backward, uncivilized and completely savage- especially at the end of his career.[68] Another Oriental work that many acknowledge as his finest is *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (1834). This painting actually fits into France's imperialist attitudes of conquering the exotic other by penetrating the forbidden harem. This painting literally illustrates a voyeuristic view of the seraglio, featuring three women and their black servant surrounded by Oriental objects and

[68]Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French painting, 1800-1880*. New York: The University of Rochester, 1982.pp. 45-46-47; 64- 65-66.

furnishings.[69] The painting contains several elements of typical harem depiction as portrayed by European painters which elaborates that the body of the Oriental woman, again, is part of the discourse of Orientalism where the metaphoric battlegrounds for European domination of North Africa. Yet, despite its typical Orientalist subject matter, this painting differs strikingly in terms of depicting harem because the spectator, in this case, cannot achieve total penetration to this other. But this does not convey that the Orient was depicted objectively as the notions of masculine colonizer and feminine colonial subject are powerfully present in the painting. It legitimizes the colonial superiority over the natives who are feminized and thus perceived, in one way or another, as inferior.[70]

A quarter-century after his departure from Morocco, when he was old, he started depicting works that were nostalgic to that Oriental world he experienced. These were all works based on Delacroix's actual observation during the Moroccan journey. Yet at many times elements of fantasy would mingle with memory. Surprisingly, although his first-hand encounter with the Orient, he returned to making the fantasy pictures of odalisques. One of these paintings was titled *Turkish Women Bathing* (1854) that depicted Oriental women completely in the nude bathing in nature. This painting was inspired by the works of other previous artists rather than his actual experience. Therefore, it has no relation, direct or arbitrary, with Turkey. Additionally to the depiction of odalisques, some of his late works contain elements of violence and savagery experience. Therefore, it has no relation, direct or arbitrary, with Turkey. Additionally to the depiction of odalisques, some of his late works contain elements of violence and savagery which did not correspond at all with his experience, especially in his scenes of combat between

[69] Laurel Ma. *The Real and Imaginary Harem: Assessing Delacroix's Women of Algiers as an Imperialist Apparatus*. Penn History Review (2O11): 9-25.p. 9.
[70] Ibid.,16.

men and wild animals. Works such as *The Arab Horseman Attacked by a Lion* (1850) which a connoisseur of art will instantly relate to the works of Rubens. Especially after his large painting *The Lion Hunt* 1861 which shows how Delacroix became preoccupied with this theme that Rubens mastered. Maybe he was looking for artistic attention despite his old age. he attempted to justify this by relating this violence to the natives' attachment to nature in its savage, destructive side.[71]Scenes of fighting among men in exotic setting were another part of Delacroix's repertory of subjects that did not derive from his own experience. He continued his series of imaginary scenes of warfare and the imagery Orient till the end of his career though Delacroix confessed the grandeur of the Orient's landscape and inhabitants as well.[72]

[71] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880*. New York: The University of Rochester, 1982: 35
[72]Ibid.,35

II. 4. GÉRÔME: THE ORIENT'S PENETRATOR.

There is no Orientalist artist that eroticized the Orient more than the French realist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme (1842-1904). He is a pupil of Delacroix, and also among the few orientalists to travel to the East extensively. Gérôme represents the realist tradition. He -devotedly- sought to establish a documentary realism. Unlike other Orientalist artists, he gained reputation at a young age. As his father in law was a gallery owner, his works sold very well. Yet, he was not successful with critics though he aspired to paint with complete realism, but as Nochlin points out, we must, clarify "whose reality we are talking about."[73]As Gérome believed that he was being objective because he used photographs to prepare for his paintings, but even photographs can still be manipulated by human judgment.[74] Most of his paintings, however, illustrate small groups of dancing girls, bathers, merchants, baths, streets and mosques. Some of the paintings are sketches made from the spot, but many more paintings depict his Parisian models posing with their vast store of Oriental costumes and props he had brought with him from the East.[75]Despite this fact, he made magnificent effort to reach high aspects of authenticity in his depiction, and to match the décor of the great Islamic architecture. Thus, his paintings were perceived to be documentary and therefore authentic.

Gérôme's art embodies the core values and conflict of the Orientalist imagery and therefore is the total manifestation of Said's theory of Orientalism, especially in the aspect of eroticizing

[73] Linda Nochlin. *The Imaginary Orient. The politics of vision: essays on nineteenth-century art and society*. Thames and Hudson, 1989. 33-59.p. 34
[74] Kelly Bloom. "*Orientalism in French 19th Century Art*. (2004): 32.
[75] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French painting, 1800-1880*. New York: The University of Rochester, 1982.pp.77-78.

and feminizing the other. It is worth mentioning that two of his paintings have become the front cover of two editions of Said's book. The first was *The Snake Charmer 1870* in which mesmerized Said with its peculiarity and the second is *the Moorish Bath 1878 (Fig.9)* that has become the front cover of the latest Penguin edition. His harem paintings, in general, are very erotic and hedonistic. They actually manifest that sexual yearning that cannot be tolerated with in the west. As his images of bathing scenes often highlight sexuality between women as they caress each other's bodies in the hammams, or bathhouses of the palace.[76] Therefore, he managed to fuel the popularity of the genre through his compelling combination of academic classicism and exoticism. His painting *The Moorish Bath 1878 (Fig.9)* became one of the most notorious images of the nineteenth century.[77] Gérôme depicts Harem women very often inside luxurious interior relaxing and enjoying their laziness, a case in point his painting *The Grand Bath at Bursa* (1875) exhibits dozen of naked harem women all around the pool, socializing with one another. Moreover, the delicacy of Gérôme's paintings transports the viewer to a space where it feels warm and humid. The women in the painting are almost at dialogue with the spectator, they are mainly naked and some are draped loosely in lush fabrics, bathing their skin and smoking from phallic-hookahs.

However, if the painting is scrutinized, something seems to be missing. The figures seem not to be engaging with one another, rather Gérôme has put his models in a room in various positions to make this painting's sole function is to please its viewer's voyeuristic eyes. Additionally, such setting, a room that is all stone, very little fabric and no carpets- it is hard not to imagine that the place is not freezing cold. So, the scene seems very unrealistic and for this reason, these women

[76] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism, the Near East in French painting, 1800-1880.* New York: The University of Rochester, 1982.pp.77-78.
[77] Adrienne L. Childs. *The Black Exotic: Tradition and Ethnography in Nineteenth-century Orientalist art*. The University of Maryland, 2005: 84.

are not naked because they choose to be, but because they have been stripped bare by the artist for pleasure viewing functions. In this way, Gérôme contradicts his claims of documenting Oriental life objectively, since he polished his images for European men's consumption.[78]

Of course, coming to a historical understanding of harem has its own set of challenges since there is little documentation about the lives of those women and even fewer information that is authentic.[79] There are claims that support the harem's sexual nature, while other claims maintain that harem life is more about family than sex. In either case, it is clear that the depth and reality of harem women's experiences are not present in Gérôme's work. Furthermore, though Gérôme did actually visit Turkey several times, there is no evidence that he ever visited a harem. Therefore, there is no validity in his so-called documenting realist style which is perceived by many to be authentic.[80]

The male black servants, or *eunuchs*, who were originally according to the myths that surround the harem, male prisoners of war or house slaves who had been castrated often without a choice. They appear several times in Gérôme's harem images, always as shrouded figures that exist in the background in a sexless inaction. *Pool in a Harem* 1876 (Fig. 10) displays a *eunuch* who bows slightly to offer hookah, the only masculine thing he can offer, to the two naked women.[81] Also, part of his penetration of the Orient and the blatant misrepresentation of harem, Gérôme made many slave market paintings, where women were sold in public in the Islamic world. For example, he demonstrated this idea in his painting *The Slave Market* 1866 (Fig.11), which depicts a fresh young woman surrounded by Oriental slave traders who seem to be

[78] Ashley Williams. *Penetrating the Veil:Gérôme's Harem Paintings and "erotic imperialism".* Professor Smith ART 420, Fall 2010. pp: 4-5.
[79] Ibid.,12.
[80] Ibid., 13.
[81] Ibid., 10.

inspecting her presumably for a purchase into a harem. Being surrounded by veiled and dressed figures, her nakedness becomes the center of attention. The most striking thing is the man who inserted his fingers into her mouth, evaluating her youth and fertility. Gérôme's paintings clearly draw upon a hegemonic discourse where the Orient is constructed as a virgin-like figure waiting for the West's penetration, manifested by the man with the extravagantly phallic fingers.

It is difficult to judge Gérôme, however, without comparing him to his peers. It is not hard to see Ingres's *The Turkish Bath*'s influence on him. The only difference remains the style. Also, while Delacroix's work was associated with accuracy because he managed to infiltrate into an actual harem in the Orient, his unrealistic style belongs to the fanciful caprice of Romanticism. Unlike Delacroix, Gerome's artistic reproduction of reality is very convincing, yet his representation of harem life still belongs to the cultural construction of fantasy harems.[82]

Artists, however, did not necessarily choose to paint the poverty, dirt, and disease that merely every visitor commented about. Instead, they wanted to portray fantasy, this fantasy can clearly be seen in his painting *The Snake Charmer* 1870. It depicts a young naked boy holding a snake while an old yet wise-looking snake charmer plays off to the left; their audience is inclined on the beautifully hand-calligraphed wall. The viewer can only watch the scene from the back, seeing only the back side of the boy and the rest of the show.[83]Nochlin points out that "anauthenticist" artist like Gérôme tries to make us forget that his art is really art by concealing the evidence of his touch as well as with his hyper-realism.[84] The same theme can be seen in his painting *The Moorish Bath* 1870. This painting portrays a beautiful white woman being washed

[82] Ibid., 12.
[83] Kelly Bloom. *Orientalism in French 19th Century Art.* (2004): 34.
[84] Linda Nochlin. The *Imaginary Orient. The politics of vision: essays on nineteenth-century art and society*. Thames and Hudson, 1989. 33-59.p. 34.

by her African black servant in a bathroom. Gérôme, as always, makes his setting almost authentic with his excessive focus to capture the Islamic architecture. The viewer enjoys this scene from behind. Hence he is prohibited from seeing the full nudity which makes her even more alluring. Yet, Gérôme, the Veils's penetrator, respected the religion of Islam and he appreciated the devotion of Muslims towards their religion, he actually painted over twenty-five works of Muslims at prayers.[85] But eventually, his paintings of his models in Oriental setting were misconstrued for Oriental and Muslim women. This became a reality that the European public assumed of the Orient. Unfortunately these western conceptions of the Orient have not changed much.

[85] jeanleongerome.org. The complete works. 2002-2017. <https://www.jeanleongerome.org/the completeworks.html>

COUNTER-NARRATIVES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE ORIENTALISM.

III. 1. FEMALE ORIENTALISTS AND THE OBJECTIVE DEPICTION OF WOMEN.

Being an art genre, Orientalism is a complex arena of thoughts and representations. Obviously, besides the artists who eroticized the Orient, there are many who represented it in a good light. Yet, these contributions of lesser-known artists (especially females) unfortunately remain undocumented and unanalyzed. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the library of Oriental travel literature growing even larger, amongst it was an increasing number of books by female authors to whom the harem was not off limits. Meanwhile, the public started to insist upon first-hand evidence of Eastern domestic life. The French poet and critic Theophile Gautier even declared in 1861 that only women should bother traveling to the Orient as a male tourist's experience would necessarily be seen as limited. His comment was prompted by the exhibition at Paris salon of great novelty paintings of a harem by a woman who had, as it seemed, derived her pictures from her own experience. This was Sophie de Bouteiller (1829-1901) - better known by her pseudonym Henriette Browne - who was, similarly to Montagu, accompanied by a diplomat husband to Constantinople for a fortnight in 1860.[86]

The focus on the experience of this neglected female artist is by no means a feminist approach, but rather a way to expose how a female would perceive another female. Hence to prove that the depiction of the Oriental female by male practitioners, who predominated artistry in nineteenth-century Europe, was far-fetched exact. Moreover, Browne's trip to the Orient

[86] Tromans, Kabbani, Mernissi, Riding, Weeks. *The lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*. Yale University. 2008: 131.

eventually inspired two of her most famous paintings. She traveled to Turkey in 1860, together with her diplomat husband, to Morrocco in 1864 and to Egypt and Syria in the winter of 1868. Apparently, these visits were not only a source of lively interest and pleasure, but also a marked epoch in her artistic education. The foreign setting presented not only a change in Browne's aesthetic overlook and professional career, but also and most importantly a change in the male-dominated Orientalist and harem painting tradition. Details of this trip were found in the diary of Mary Walker, an amateur fellow painter of Browne's who lived in Turkey for over thirty years. Walker mentions taking her inside a harem in 1860. At first, the two would ask their hostess not to receive them formally, which simply meant that a formal visit would end up with the women wearing European clothes, as was the fashion of the day that was purely influenced by the colonial enterprise in the region.[87] These informal visits, which had been an insight that was granted to few foreign ladies, introduced Browne to the harem classrooms where the girls were trained in music and dancing.

Browne's two paintings produced in 1860 of Harem interiors *A Visit* (Fig.12) and *A flute Player* were exhibited for the first time in the 1861 Paris salon and caused a surprise at first and a stir later on. This stir occurred of the fact that it was a female artist who had actually seen and depicted a harem from within, revealing that the male Orientalist of the day worked on mere speculations. Therefore, Browne's major contribution was that she discredited one of the most prevailing cultural myths about the harem. She transformed it from a primarily phallic into a gynocentric place.[88] The setting of her painting *A Visit* is rather a main reception hall of a probably moderately wealthy household. The principal wife welcomes, in a respectful display of

[87] Julia Kuehn. *Exotic Harem Paintings: Gender, Documentation, and Imagination*. Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies 32.2 (2011): 31-63.p. 37.
[88] Ibid., 39.

mutual bows, her two guests who seem to have just arrived since they still wear outdoor cloaks and the veil which they would be allowed to remove indoor the harem, and within all female communities. A number of female depictions constitute the social network of the harem; some are sitting in groups on the typical low couch while others are standing alone, each gaze in different direction. However, the most remarkable figure is that of the young girl clinging to the arms of her mother, which is a clear emphasis on the social function of the harem that is based on familial relations rather than the operative and entirely sexualized manner. The young girl strikingly stands as the only figure in the painting that is looking directly at the artist.[89]

A Flute Player takes the visitor further into the harem and into what actually could have been the dance and music room that Browne saw. The young harem musician performs for who also seem to be newly-arrived guests. While the four older women on the left pay full attention to the musician, the two younger girls on the other side of the painting are somewhat distracted by the movement of a tortoise crawling on a chest.[90] Unlike the male orientalists, Browne somehow humanizes the harem with her female unseen perspective, giving factual information that no male Orientalist could have offered to the public. She provides objective information about the harem due to her privileged access that her male counterparts did not have the chance to enjoy. Therefore, she embarked on the Orientalist genre and received exclusive praise; as a Western female, she was allowed into the harem of women's quarters that she documented with a feminine yet objective perspective. Also, while the subject matter of Browne's paintings certainly makes an attempt to present the harem space as one of ordinary domestic activities, the

[89] Megan McDaniel. *Re-Presenting the Harem: Orientalist Female Artists and the 19Th Century Ottoman Empire*. Florida State University Libraries. 2014: 45.
[90] Kuehn, Julia. *Exotic Harem Paintings: Gender, Documentation, and Imagination.* Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies 32.2 (2011): 31-63.p. 39

painter's aesthetic execution still retains the impression of remoteness. She witnesses and portrays a welcoming scene between Turkish women, and she observes a musical performance, but she does not participate in either. She remains only a Western observer which, assumingly, was her intention.[91]Browne gained much fame for her empiricism, the convincing spatial effects, and the almost invisible brushstrokes that do not reveal the artist's hand and the choice of colors, particularly in her painting *A visit.* It contains this traditional touch that made her a well-acclaimed female artist in a world that is, practically and theoretically, ruled by male perspectives and artworks. Browne's paintings were, without doubt, celebrated, as they were novel and contradicted the male Orientalist's perspectives and tradition in terms of documentary, truthful subjects of domesticity and the female community. Besides being uncontroversial in terms of style, as her reputation among critics, as a professional female artist, was never at risk.[92]

Surprisingly, it seems that the typical Orientalist paintings were not a misrepresentation because of the artists themselves, but because of the demands of the artistic environment that they had to abide. This explains why their paintings were praised in terms of aesthetic values that they offer. Consequently, Browne's paintings held great disappointments to those who attached themselves to such exotic dreams of the Orient. This was the case with the critic Olivier Merson who said that "Browne's pictures disturb our Oriental dreams a little, if she had painted the seraglio of a Grand-Seigneur, perhaps we would have been less disappointed."[93]As it is put, Browne's two harem interior paintings disappointed Merson's expectations that he hoped she depicted a seraglio that would leave a room for *Arabian Nights* fantasies. Browne is, in Merson's *Exposition de 1861* review, too chaste, too boring, and too feminine; he even preferred another

[91] Ibid., 40
[92] Ibid., 41 .
[93] Olivier Merson. *Exposition de 1861*: *La Peinture en France* (Paris: Libraire de la Société des Gens de Lettres, 1861).pp. 275–76.

depiction of sultan's willful violence, lavish possessions, and sexual powers, as in Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* 1827. In addition to Merson, many critics of the era criticized Browne's Orientalist paintings asserting that an Oriental representation had to preserve some pre-existing features in order to succeed and to be considered exotic.[94] Noting that a closer look at Browne's interior harem paintings reveals that a number of fantasy elements have been retained for aesthetic purposes in order to avoid negative feedback, but generally her main focus was depicting the uniqueness the cultural otherness of Turkey presented. However, the gazes of the harem women remain striking as the majority's gaze is not directed towards the welcoming scene, but elsewhere.[95] Despite Browne's verifiable access to an actual Ottoman harem, and despite the documentary realist nature of her paintings, which refute many cultural gender myths by portraying the harem as domestic and social, the mystery in her paintings remains a central cliché about the harem. A case in point, the painting *A Flute Player*, the curtain in the background, remains drawn, and thus the viewer will never see it open. These barriers of cloth and darkness serve as a reminder that although the Ottoman harem may appear mundane, it still maintains secrets that neither the audience, nor the artist herself is able to access.[96] This is why the harem remains one of the trickiest subject matters. It is impenetrable in nature; hence, the typical Orientalist paintings were just expression of frustration accumulated because of this impenetrability.

All in all, Browne's harem paintings are a true evidence of the falsity of the typical depiction of the Oriental women in Orientalist paintings. She adheres to the principles of

[94]Julia Kuehn. *Exotic Harem Paintings: Gender, Documentation, and Imagination*." Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies 32.2 (2011): 31-63.p. 43.
[95] Ibid., 43.
[96] Megan McDaniel. *Re-Presenting the Harem: Orientalist Female Artists and the 19Th Century Ottoman Empire*. 2014: 45.

documentation and flexibly adapts to the existing aesthetic notions. Browne opened the door to other subsequent female orientalists. She introduced a new and decorous image of the female residing in the harem alongside other neglected female Orientalist artists who also preserved this image of the Orient, such as Mary Adelaide Walker who created numerous illustrations of harem interiors during her term in Constantinople.

III.2. AN ORIENTAL COUNTER-NARRATIVE.

While Henriette Browne provides a counter-narrative to Orientalism from within, Osman Hamdi Bey's artworks counteract the discourse from outside. Hamdi Bey (1842-1910) combined many roles as a museum director, curator, archeologist and above all a prominent Ottoman Painter. Therefore, he remains one of the most studied characters of the late Ottoman cultural history. This "overstuying" which Osman Hamdi Bey has been subjected to is further characterized by a systematic disregard for historical context and a tendency to seek hidden meanings in the artist's paintings.[97] Having the privilege to study art on the hands of Gustave Boulanger in Paris, a polemic question has been raised whether or not Osman Hamdi Bey was an Orientalist artist by the literal meaning of the word, and if that is the case, whether his Orientalism is comparable to that of his western contemporaries. As an answer, the Turkish historian Edhem Eldem comments "he may have been orientalist in style, but his intentions were quite different from that of the European painter of the same genre."[98] Indeed, Osman Hamdi Bey has always represented the Orient in a more dignified, respectful, accurate and objective way, resulting in major difference with his western counterparts who constructed their own erotic image of the Orient. Yet, he is viewed by some as offering a revisionist response to the blatant misrepresentation of the Orient by western orientalists,[99] and by others as Ottoman Orientalist whose works are complex and therefore cannot, in any sense, manifest any counter-narrative significance.[100]

[97] Edhem Eldem,. *An Ottoman Traveler to the Orient*." Poetics and Politics of Place. Ed. Mary Roberts, Reina Lewis and Zeynep Inankur. Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2011. 169-181.
[98] Edhem Eldem. *Making Sense of Osman Hamdi Bey and His Paintings*. Muqarnas. Vol. 29. 2012. 339–383.
[99] Zeynep Celik. *Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse*. Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography. Éd. Beaulieul Jill and Roberts Mary. Duke University Press, 2002. 20- 41.
[100] Edhem Eldem. *Making Sense of Osman Hamdi Bey and His Paintings*. Muqarnas. Vol. 29. 2012. 339–383.

Having studied art in Paris, he was drawn to the atelier of Gustave Boulanger and assumedly that of Jean-Léon Gérôme, his own work matured, definitely, under the technical and thematic influence of the French Orientalist School. Nevertheless, "his scenes of the Orient" provide persistent critiques of mainstream Orientalist paintings. They represent a reluctant voice since the painter is a refined Ottoman intellectual.[101] Hamdi Bey's men and women dressed in colorful garments in Orientalist fashion and placed in "authentic" setting- are thinking, questioning, reading and acting human beings. They display none of the passivity and eroticism attributed to them by European painters such as the case with two of his famous paintings *The Scholar* 1878 (Fig.13) that is held currently by Louvre Abu Dhabi and portrays a young emir reading, and *Theolgist* 1907 (Fig.15) which depicts a man fully immersed in thinking while reading what seems to be the Qur'an. Additionally, his painting *Girl Having her Hair Combed* (1881) shows how the upper-class demoiselle has full control over her body as she watches herself attentively in the mirror, supervising her coiffure. Here, Osman Hamdi counteracts Gerome's *The Moorish Bath* (1885), whose centerpiece is a young naked woman in a bath being washed, as usual, by a black servant. In contrast, Osman Hamdi Bey's is a decorous worker that appears in the painting as simply doing her job.[102]Also, it is quintessential to highlight Hamdi's role as an archeologist, he participated in important archeological excavations with the Imperial Museum at pre-Islamic sites including Sidon and Nemrut Dağı. Furthermore, he rewrote antiquities' legislation in order to protect Ottoman artifacts from foreign researchers who would often remove them from the country and ship them to Europe.[103]

[101] Zeynep Celik. "*Colonialism, Orientalism and the Canon*." Art Bulletin. Vol. 78. 1996. 202-205.
[102] Ibid,.20
[103] Edhem Eldem. *An Ottoman Traveler to the Orient*. Poetics and Politics of Place. Ed. Mary Roberts, Reina Lewis and Zeynep Inankur. Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2011. 169-181.

Concerning the portrayal of women in painting, Hamdi's scenes of Ottoman women often portray them enjoying intellectual and cultural activities such as reading, or playing musical instruments (Fig.14).Moreover, as a reaction to the cliché of the "Oriental" women as sex objects in Orientalism's innumerable seductive odalisques, Hamdi makes sure to depict the Oriental woman as fully clothed and engaged in cultural pursuits, rather than displayed for the voyeuristic pleasures of the viewer.[104]Among his many paintings, his painting *A Girl Reading* 1893 shows a young woman stretched out on a sofa, totally immersed in a book. Her relaxed and casual pose implies that she is not reading a religious book, but rather a work of literature.[105] The painting exhibits a great deal of Oriental details, complete with rugs, tiles, inscriptions and Islamic architectural elements. Also, the shelves behind her are stuffed with books which state that reading occupies an important part of her life. Thus, the girl is given an intellectual aspect and life that is denied by the Orientalist painters.[106]

Osman Hamdi Bey addressed the major themes of Orientalist painters from his critical stance as an outsider within the outside. This is how Zeynep Çelik described him in her 1996 essay *Colonialism, Orientalism and the Canon.* She asserts that Hamdi offers an image of Islam as a religion that encourages intellectual curiosity, discussion, debate and even doubt. A significant example would be his painting *Lesson at the Mosque Door* (1899) which shows that Hamdi's men are men of religion, reading and discussing books maintain their human dignity.[107]The painting depicts three men in Oriental garb, who seem to have been in an argumentative discussion. The basic argument shared by many scholars' interpretation of the painting, is that

[104] Zeynep Celik. *Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse*. Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography. Ed. Beaulieu Jill and Roberts Mary. Duke University Press, 2002. 20-41.p.23.
[105] Ibid,.25.
[106] Ibid,.25.
[107] Zeynep Celik. *Colonialism, Orientalism and the Canon*. Art Bulletin. Vol. 78. 1996. 202-205.

these men are doing more than just reading and reciting holly texts. Rather, they are engaged in a discussion, or even a disagreement, which elevates them to the rank of rational men. Instead of the simple faithful- not to say the fanatics- that western Orientalism chooses to represent.[108]

As Browne, Hamdi's paintings are offering an aesthetically pleasing, technically convincing, and a culturally consistent vision of the Islamic Orient. Yet, despite several exhibitions of his work in Paris and at the World's Fair, Osman Hamdi's attempts to correct the eroticization of the Orient remained overlooked in France and were not interpreted into art history's discourse on Orientalism until very recently.[109]Mainly, after his paintings fetched high prices in auctions such as his *Tortoise Trainer* which was sold in 2004 for $3.5 million becoming the most expensive sold painting by a Turkish artist.

[108] Edhem Eldem. *Making Sense of Osman Hamdi Bey and His Paintings*. Muqarnas. Vol. 29. 2012. 339–383
[109] Edhem Eldem. *Making Sense of Osman Hamdi Bey and His Paintings*. Muqarnas. Vol. 29. 2012. 339–383

CONCLUSION

With all this being said, Orientalism as both a discourse and representation, must be reconsidered and re-evaluated in terms of its truthfulness. Orientalist paintings as I have argued depict a constructed sphere that no way could match with the reality the Orient imposes, especially the depiction of the Muslim women. Aesthetics, however, should not reinforce their aesthetic value while disregarding their political aspects because then aesthetics legitimizes the colonial agendas that these paintings bestow. Moreover, I do agree with those who said that orientalist art should not be reduced to its extreme expressions of sensuality and violence. Obviously, as there are many orientalists who presented a distorted image of the Orient, there are many who represented it in a good light. Yet, the influence of such artworks and initiatives remains disregarded or dismantled by the prevailing forms of Orientalist meta-narratives.

It is true that Orientalist paintings remain just a classical form of Orientalism, yet the exoticism of the Orient is still reproduced in arts, literature, and films. The counter-narratives that I have provided- manifested in the works of Henriette Browne and Osman Hamdi Bey- remain a major evidence of the falsity of the authentic aspects Orientalist paintings claim to have. Despite the fact interpretations of their works are overshadowed with many challenges, many are attached to their aesthetic values. Moreover, we cannot overcome modern misrepresentations of the Orient unless we first recognize the failure of the Orientalist painting to represent and document the cultural otherness of the Orient. In the same context, modern understanding of the Orient remains improbable and unreachable- especially with all the Islamophobic publicity that is being produced recently which clearly serves political agendas. However, Orientalist art’s status as a linking bridge between East and West is proved to be

otherwise. Thus, the Orient must create for itself a discourse that defines it away from being a subsequent entity, image, and narrative to Orientalism

ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover illustration: Detail. Jean-Léon Gérôme . *Pelt Merchant of Cairo.* 1869, oil on canvas, Christie's Auction House, London.



Fig.1. Gentile Bellini. *The Sultan Mehmet II*. 1480, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.



Fig.2.Unknownartist.*Abdel-Ouahed ben Messaoud ben Mohammed Anoun*. c. 1600, the collection of University of Birmingham.



Fig. 3: Antoine-Jean Gros. *Battle of the Pyramids*. 1810, oil on canvas, Musée National du Château, Versailles.



Fig.4. Antoine-Jean Gros. *Bonaparte Visiting the Victims of the Plague at Jaffa*. 1804, oil on canvas, Louvre Museum, Paris.



Fig.5.Jean-Auguste DominiqueIngres. *GrandeOdalisque*.1814, oil on canvas, Louvre Museum, Paris.



Fig.6. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. *Odalisque with Slave*.1839, oil on canvas, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.7. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. *Turkish Bath*. 1863, oil on canvas fixed to panel, Louvre Museum, Paris.



Fig.8. Eugène Delacroix. *The Death of Sardanapalus*.1827, oil on canvas, Louvre Museum, Paris.



Fig.9.Jean-LéonGérôme. *Moorish Bath*, oil on canvas, c.1885, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Massachusetts

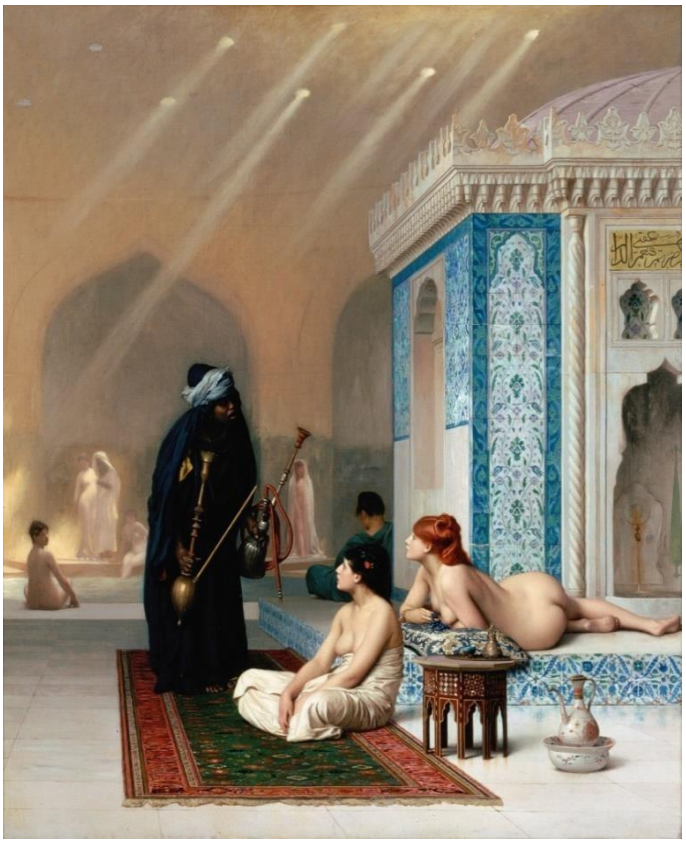


Fig.10. Jean-Leon Gérôme. *Pool in a Harem*. c. 1876, oil on canvas, Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

Fig.11.Jean-Léon Gérôme. *The Slave Market*.1866, oil on canvas, Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.





Fig.12. Henriette Browne. *A Visit: Harem Interior, Constantinople*. 1860, Oil on Canvas, private collection.

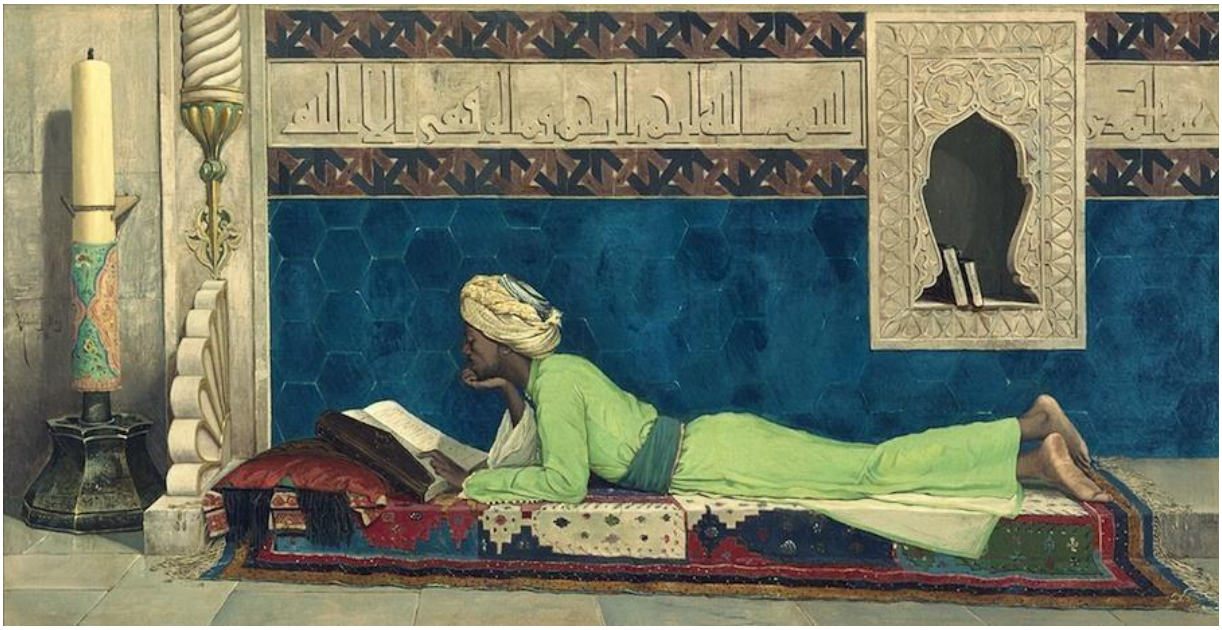


Fig.13. Osman Hamdi Bey. *The Scholar*, 1878, Oil on Canvas, Louvre Abu Dhabi.



Fig.14. Osman Hamdi Bey. *Two Musician Girls*. 1880, Oil on canvas, Pera Museum, Istanbul.

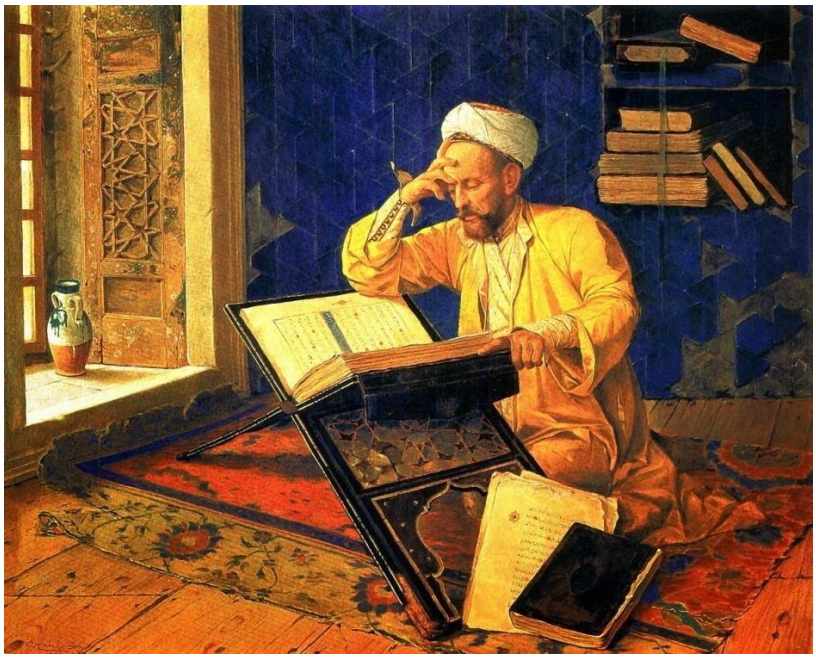


Fig. 15. Osman Hamdi Bey.*Theologist.* 1907, Oil on canvas, Feyyaz Berker Collection, Turkey.

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